

**State of Delaware - Commission for Women**  
**Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy**  
**Department of Human Resources**

Regular Meeting  
Dover, Tatnall Building, Room 112  
Monday, November 27, 2017  
10:30 am to 12:00 pm

**Attendees:**

Melanie Ross Levin, Director, Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy  
Dr. Marian Palley, Commissioner Chairwoman  
Rosalia Velasquez, Commissioner  
Alisha Bryson, Commissioner  
Dr. Sobia S. Choudhri, Commissioner  
Katherine Caudle, Commissioner  
Michelle Taylor, Commissioner  
Sherry Dorsey Walker, Commissioner  
Sherese Brewington-Carr, Commissioner  
Lydia Massey, Director, Boards and Commissions  
Brenda Wyatt, Department of Human Resources  
Kim Paul  
Erin J. Goldner

**DRAFT MINUTES**

Documents distributed were:

- Agenda for today's meeting
- Draft minutes from the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting
- A list of key issues for the Commission to address

**Call to Order and Roll Call:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Palley with roll call of Commissioners. Others present introduced themselves.

**Acceptance of Minutes:**

Katherine Caudle made a motion, seconded by Alisha Bryson, to accept minutes from October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. Motion passed.

**Comments by Chairwoman Palley:**

The Bylaws Committee and the Women's Needs subcommittee met. Copies of the actions were sent out. The Bylaws subcommittee reviewed the bylaws draft and offered comments. Representative Valerie Longhurst, who sponsored HB4, will attend January Commission for Women meeting.

Consideration for January's meeting agenda is needed today.

**Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy:**

Melanie Ross Levin shared that the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy's (OWAA) Executive Secretary starts on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The Policy and Research analyst position will soon be filled as well. The Chief Diversity Officer position in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) is being filled, and Melanie participated in the selection process. HB4 and the Ivy Report were the reason for the creation of the new Diversity and Inclusion Division. The Delaware Women's Hall of Fame committee will meet on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:30 am to 1 pm. The Delaware Women's Workforce Council will meet on December 8<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 am to 1 pm. Melanie is meeting with individuals and groups across the state. She is requesting if there are known groups or individuals that she needs to connect with, especially for Kent and Sussex, please contact her. Commissioners should forward issues that affect women in Delaware to Melanie. She has reached out to AEW of Boston, Delaware Women's Agenda, Fund for Women and spoke at Delaware International Women's Forum event and a multi-cultural meeting in Senate District 10. The OWAA is working on an official launch for the office, including social media along with a special event with the Governor. Please submit ideas to Melanie. Archives from the previous Commission are being requested. The OWAA budget is being reviewed and developed. A briefing or report of OWAA activities and involvement, as well as a calendar of events was requested, including the scope of what is being shared by the office at events.

**Bylaws Proposal:**

Lydia Massey assisted with the bylaws draft. A revision was sent to the Commissioners. The Commission for Women is advisory to the OWAA. The Delaware Code related to the Commission is Title 29, Chapter 90D, §9009D. The positions within the Commission were shared as noted in HB4 and Title 29. The bylaws are vague intentionally regarding the structure to avoid binding specifics. Term lengths for the Vice-Chair and Secretary were discussed. A revision to the bylaws to include that the Chair has the authority to assign the duties, discussed in an executive committee, to another member should the Vice-Chair or Secretary be unable to perform the duties. Alisha Bryson made a motion, seconded by Katherine Caudle to set a one year term limit for both the Vice-Chair and Secretary. Motion passed. There was discussion on the board structure. For members who resign, an election is permitted. Annual elections were recommended. Michelle Taylor made a motion, second by Sherese Brewington-Carr, to accept the bylaws with the revision. Motion passed. A comment was made that language needs to remain gender neutral. A motion was made to accept point F and seconded. Motion passed.

Chairperson

**Women's Needs subcommittee meeting:**

The committee needs to organize a high visibility event and to get a story out to the press regarding the Commission. A summary of the meeting held on 11/14 was shared. A framework list of issues was shared as a starting point to address in the coming months. These will be prioritized and characterized into major categories. A March media event to introduce the Commission will be planned. Domestic violence needs to be defined and given priority. Melanie will coordinate with the Women's Workforce

Council. There was discussion on the label of “victim” as it relates to sexual assault, harassment and abuse. Addressing women’s issues and problems is significant. Comment was made to empower and educate women on their worth. Melanie indicated the OWAA will assist to coordinate events among the Commission for Women, Women’s Workforce Council and the Women’s Hall of Fame. There is an aspiration for a subcommittee for business women to mentor teen girls. Melanie will follow-up to provide data when the Research and Policy Analyst is hired for the office. Melanie commented that timely and digestible reports are needed. Data should be released at certain times with clarification on the timeframe of the data, including budget information. Data from the previous Commission is available. The Women’s Commission could present at various events and conferences, but it is key to determine the focus of the conference and what will be accomplished by presenting. Commissioners should submit ideas to the OWAA. Once the OWAA is staffed, priorities and a calendar of events will be established. Women in the workplace and girls could be considered major categories, among others. The Women’s Commission will move forward with priorities when the OWAA is staffed and a calendar of events can be created.

Note: All meetings must be open to the public, and there is a public meeting calendar at <https://publicmeetings.delaware.gov/> when meetings are posted.

The OWAA web site (<https://dhr.delaware.gov/owaa/index.shtml>) is currently only a landing page, and the Women’s Commission member names are going to be added. There is a need to make correct and credible referrals to the public. Melanie is fielding calls and making contact with key state agencies for accurate referrals. The 211 statewide referral system needs updating as laws require and including services for women. Online resources and referrals are needed to build the web site. Consideration is being made for students to possibly research and assist to build web content. Should request GIC to come to the Women’s Commission meeting to assist. Chairwoman Palley will set up a subcommittee to formulate ideas on how to address assisting the OWAA with their needs. Previous Women’s Commission web content is accessible.

#### **Public Comments:**

Kim Paul commented that she is fascinated by the work that Commission is preparing to do. She mentioned that she does not want to be labeled as a victim. Empowerment is a positive term and there is a need to encourage young girls.

#### **Remarks:**

Melanie needs a bio for each Commission member.  
A Social Needs subcommittee meeting was scheduled for 12/11.

#### **Adjournment:**

Motion was made to adjourn by Alisha Bryson, and seconded by Katherine.